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***Beyond the Studio: A Case Study of Community Radio and Social Capital***

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## **Beyond the Studio: A Case Study of Community Radio and Social Capital.**

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*In this paper I explore the community development function of community broadcasting. I do so with a case study of three non-metropolitan community radio stations, conducted in 1998 and 1999. I apply aspects of the concept of social capital to analyse the results of research conducted at the participating stations. The findings indicate that social capital is related to the age composition of volunteers at community radio.*

### **1. Introduction: Community Radio And Community Development.**

In this paper I present the results of qualitative research designed to explore the community development function of community broadcasting. The sector is ideally placed to promote community development and satisfies the principle of subsidiarity which is implicit in the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992*.

I define community development as ‘the enhancement of the whole community and its citizens’ (Onyx and Bullen 1997: 25-26). This definition rests on the principle of subsidiarity, which holds that decisions should be made by those most directly affected by the outcomes of those decisions. Community development further rests on the principles of personal empowerment and the development of structures and processes by which groups can meet their own needs.

The sector embraces participatory decision-making processes, which form part of the Code of Practice. Community broadcasting contributes towards empowerment in that it trains

individuals in broadcasting skills (DoCA 1997); it forms local and extended networks (Melzer.2000); and can provide ‘a sense of local community identity’ (Elson 2000).

## **2. Social Capital And Community Development.**

According to Fukuyama (1995:6) social capital is the ability of people to work together for common purposes in groups, organisations, and at the workplace. It is vital to economic life, since economic activity requires social collaboration and it can satisfy a fundamental desire for human recognition (Fukuyama 1993:6). Social capital creates the possibility for community development and it is also a key product of community development (Onyx & Bullen 1997:25-26). A minimal, pre-existing level of social capital is necessary for community development to work. But once in place community development processes will generate further stocks of social capital.

Onyx and Bullen (1997:5-6) have identified a number of themes which more fully describe the concept. The key to social capital is a prevalence of *trust* based on the expectations of regular, honest and cooperative behaviour. Trust promotes a sense of confidence and an environment that permits risk taking. Trust rests on shared *social norms* and values, which are generally unwritten but commonly understood formula for determining appropriate and approved patterns of behaviour. Shared norms and values obviate the necessity for formal institutionalised legal sanctions. Social capital draws on a philosophy of *the commons*, which holds that individuals are not motivated by utilitarian self-interest in the pursuit of pleasure, but by complex social and individual goals. These goals are characterised by *reciprocity*, defined as a combination of short-term altruism and long term self interest, but not the immediate and formally accounted exchange of the legal or business contract. The individual provides a service to others or acts for the benefit of others at a personal cost, but in the general expectation that this kindness will be returned at some undefined time in the future in case of need. Social capital is generated through the *participation in networks*, the more or less dense interlocking web of voluntary and mutual relationships between individuals and groups. Social capital can be produced almost anywhere where there are people interacting

voluntarily in the common interest. It is therefore not limited to geographic communities but whenever people come together. Finally, social capital requires a *pro-active* citizenry, that is, active and willing individuals with a sense of personal and collective capacities to produce desired outcomes (or empowerment).

The generation of social capital will most likely take place in voluntary associations (Onyx & Bullen 1997:24-25). Although not all non-profit organisations are conducive to enhancing social capital. Those with large bureaucracies or with vertical and coercive decision making structures are unlikely to generate social capital. In such organisations choice is absent and individual pro-activity is discouraged. Organisations that discourage tolerance, such as the Ku Klux Klan, also do not contribute to generating social capital (Cox 1995).

### **3. Researching Community Radio's Community Development Function.**

There is little research that addresses the community development capacity of community radio (Barlow 1998; Coates 1997). Similarly, there are few studies concerned with measures of social capital (Onyx & Bullen 1997; Putnam 1993; Williams 1995). Social capital, however, has much in common with a *pluralist* research tradition. This argues that voluntary organisations enable individuals to directly participate in political activity, or in the case of organisations without political aims, widen people's interests and contacts, and provides them with leadership skills which ultimately results in political mobilisation (Pickvance 1986:225-6). Pluralist studies are mainly based on quantitative survey research of large populations. As such they are unable to shed light on the nature of participation at the organisational and individual level.

In this paper I present the results of a survey conducted at three non-metropolitan community radio stations, conducted between September 1998 and December 1999. Although the research tool is quantitative, the results form part of a qualitative study in which I adopt a range of techniques. This approach provides depth to the research but rules out generalisation. The results are specific to the selected stations, although connections can be

made with aspects of the community broadcasting more generally. To start with, I will present an overview of the stations that agreed to participate in this study.

#### 4. Three Stations, Three Communities.

The three non-metropolitan stations had all been broadcasting for 10 years or more and were all members of the CBAA. One of the participating stations wishes to remain anonymous and will be referred to as 9CRX; the others were 4RRR at Roma and 2TEN at Tenterfield. Little is known about rural community radio, even though about 75 percent of generalist community radio stations are located outside capital cities (*Communications Update* 2000:21). However, comparisons with the little available data suggests the selected stations are not unusual. About 50 percent of stations affiliated with the CBAA operate on less than \$100,000 per year (Thompson 1997:18). According to the stations' annual returns 9CRX's average annual turnover is \$80,000; 2TEN turns over \$100,000 per annum; and 4RRR about \$3,000 per annum. In terms of gender, table 1 shows that the ratio of males to females for the case study volunteers is close to the national figure (ABS 1998), although there were marked differences between the stations.<sup>1</sup>

Table 1. Station volunteers by gender.

Station	Total	Males %	Females %
9CRX	31	64.5	35.5
2TEN	25	48.0	52.0
4RRR	17	58.8	41.2
Total	73	57.5	42.5
All volunteers*	11203	58.3	41.7

\*ABS1998:9.

<sup>1</sup> The 9CRX sample represents 37.6 percent of the total number of volunteers. Questionnaires were posted to volunteers via their pigeon holes at the station. This approach was replaced by face-to-face interviews at the other two stations which resulted in a much improved response rate. This does raise implications for interpretation of the results.

9CRX and 2TEN provide 'generalist' programming, which consists of a format of 'strip' programming during peak listener hours and 'block' programming after 6.00 p.m. and on weekends. Light and popular music characterises strip programs, interspersed with news bulletins, sponsorship announcements, community service announcements and the occasional interview. Block programming consists of specialist programs, for example particular music genres, issues or hobbies and ethnic programs. 4RRR aims for a similar format, but lack of volunteers meant it relied mostly on ComRadSat, the networked service provided by the CBAA. None of the selected stations shared a footprint with other community broadcasters.

9CRX broadcasts to a rural region, approximately 75 kilometres from a major city. The region has a population of 110,000 and is continuing to grow. Population growth has seen a shift away from rural activities and towards the manufacturing and services industries. 9CRX is the only radio station to specifically target the region. However, residents also receive commercial, national, community and narrowcast media from nearby cities.

9CRX commenced broadcasting in 1990 and, at the time of the fieldwork, had 85 volunteers and about 750 members. The station employs a sponsorship coordinator, who earns a small wage and commission. About 60 percent of the station's income is from local sponsorship. The station is housed rent-free in a building owned by the local council.

2TEN broadcasts to the Shire of Tenterfield and very recently to Stanthorpe -- some 60 kilometres to the north in Queensland. Tenterfield is primarily a sheep and cattle grazing area and the region is also famous for its national parks and the vineyards of the Granite Belt. Apart from 2TEN no other radio stations specifically service Tenterfield. Residents can receive ABC broadcasts and more recently a commercial FM radio station from Beaudesert, in Queensland, has extended its reach to the Shire. Tourist Radio FM 88.0 is absent (2TEN having purchased all the available narrowcasting licenses).

2TEN commenced broadcasting in 1986. At the time of the fieldwork the station had about 35 volunteers and around 120 members. The station employs two full-time staff: the station

manager and a sales person. Around 78 percent of its income is generated from local sponsorship. The station occupies a rent-free building owned by the council and located behind the Shire offices. In return 2TEN maintains the building and an attractive landscaped garden.

4RRR broadcasts to the town of Roma; located about 500 kilometres west of Brisbane. Roma has a population of 6495 people, is a centre for the pastoral industry and also plays an important role in the extraction of natural gas. The town is a major state public service centre and is becoming increasingly popular with tourists. In addition to regional ABC broadcasts, Roma listeners can receive commercial radio HOT-FM on relay from St. George and AM station 4ZR located in Roma. Tourist Radio FM 88.0 also services Roma.

4RRR commenced broadcasting in 1990. During the course of the fieldwork 4RRR was barely surviving with the lowest volunteer level it has ever experienced. There were 19 volunteers and about 20 members. Annual income has been under \$3,000 while annual expenditure has been close to \$5000. Income generation has mainly relied on the success of single events, such as a movie night or the promotion of a musician, or from a grant received from the Community Broadcasting Foundation. Roma Town Council provides studio space, which is a single room in a dilapidated building that is also used by other societies.

Table 2. Summary of main features, 9CRX, 2TEN, 4RRR.

Station	9CRX	2TEN	4RRR
Annual income	\$80,000	\$100,000	\$3,000
Volunteers	85	32	19
Population of locality *	98525	6532	6361
Aged 15 +	73.84	78.05	74.93
Total Employed Persons	36241	2310	3040
Unemployment rate	12.15	11.87	6.54
% Weekly Income <\$200	40%	48.7%	32.7%

\*ABS CDATA 1996.

Table 2 provides a summary of the main features of each radio station, as well as some

demographic characteristics collected for the 1996 census. The table reveals that the community with the least number of employed people and the largest proportion of low-income earners has the most financially successful community radio station. This result challenges the assumption that community radio stations in small centres are more likely to be in financial jeopardy (Thompson 1997:19).

2TEN's relative financial success may largely be due to the absence of commercial and narrowcasting competitors. 9CRX also operates in a community where there are few local competitors and has a population 15 times that of Tenterfield, but it is financially slightly less successful. Perhaps this is because the region serviced by 9CRX is less isolated compared to Tenterfield and 9CRX also has competition from nearby centres. Roma has a similar size population to Tenterfield but also hosts a local commercial broadcaster. However, the local commercial station increasingly relies on relayed broadcasts thus diminishing its focus on the Roma community. This creates an opportunity for 4RRR to develop closer ties with local businesses. While competition from other broadcasters does play a role in the success of a community radio station, I suggest that economic factors alone cannot account for the differences between stations described above. If Fukuyama is correct in the claim that economic life rests on a store of social capital (1993:6), then the highest degree of social capital will be evident at 2TEN and the lowest degree will be evident at 4RRR. In order to test this assumption I examined structural features of each station and then addressed a number of social capital elements.

## **5. Structural Features.**

All three stations meet the principles of community development. In terms of subsidiarity, each station is incorporated as a non-profit association with the membership electing directors at the Annual General Meeting. At all stations membership, and thus access, is open to anyone from the community. In terms of decision-making 9CRX tends to have more formal structures compared to 2TEN and 4RRR, but this is partly a function of the larger volunteer population. Each station includes training objectives in their constitutions, which

contribute towards the empowerment of individuals. While a community development focus is concerned with organisational structures and processes, my structural focus is also concerned with demographic variation among the three stations (see Pickvance 1986:225-7). Demographic data can reveal occupational structures of the membership, their associational affiliations and provide an insight into the resources and world-views that volunteers bring to the organisation. In the first instance demographic data can be compared with a national study of volunteers conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (1996).

Table 3. Station demography.

Station		9CRX	2TEN	4RRR
<b>Gender</b>	Male	63%	48%	59%
	Female	37%	52%	41%
<b>Age category %</b>	Under 20	3.2	28.0	29.4
	20 - 29	6.5	8.0	35.3
	30 - 39	6.5	28.0	-
	40 - 49	22.6	4.0	23.5
	50 and older	61.3	32.0	11.8
	Total (n)	31	25	16
<b>Median age</b>		50-59	30-39	20-29
<b>Marital status</b>	Single	19.4	40.0	52.9
	Married/de facto	64.5	48.0	29.4
	Total (n)	31	25	17
<b>Education level</b>	Year 11 or less	19.4	52.0	35.3
	Year 12	22.6	4.0	-
	TAFE/post-secondary	38.7	16.0	47.0
	Tertiary	19.4	24.0	17.6
	Total (n)	31	25	17
<b>Employment status</b>	Not in the work force	42.0	22.7	14.2
	Part-time employed	22.6	27.3	7.1
	Full-time employed	22.6	27.3	64.3
	Seeking employment	6.5	9.1	14.3
	Self-employed	6.5	13.6	-
	Total (n)	31	22	14
<b>Occupation</b>	Unskilled/semiskilled	23.5	21.4	10.0
	Trade	17.6	7.1	20.0
	Clerical/sales	23.5	28.6	30.0

Professional/managerial	23.5	35.7	40.0
Other	11.8	7.1	-
Total (n)	17	14	10

Table 3 provides a summary of demographic variations between the three stations. The table indicates that at all three stations a high number of volunteers are employed in professional and managerial occupations. This accords with the findings of the ABS survey, which found that volunteer rates for those employed in professional and managerial occupations was more than twice those of machine operators and labourers. Managers, administrators and professionals are also more likely to be involved in management and committee activities as well as fundraising (ABS 1996:15). The presence of volunteers with such skills would benefit any not-for-profit community organisation.

2TEN volunteers were predominantly women, had tertiary qualifications, were employed in professional and managerial occupations and also in clerical and sales jobs. Volunteers were either employed part-time or full-time, while over a fifth of the volunteers were not in the workforce. Nearly one-third of volunteers was aged between 50 and 59, while two age groups were equally represented: volunteers under 20 and those aged between 30 and 39. According to the ABS study, volunteer rates in the welfare and community sector peaks in the 55-64 age group for both males and females. While people aged between 35 and 44 reported the highest volunteer rate and at this age are most likely to be married with children. In this age group women with part time jobs reported the highest rate of volunteer involvement, and they are most likely to volunteer for organisations that have a youth development and training focus (ABS 1996:1-3).

At 9CRX the volunteers are predominantly males aged 50 years or older, married and with post-secondary qualifications. A large number of volunteers are retired from the workforce (42 percent). Males are also more inclined to volunteer for recreational and hobby-based organisations, in addition to the welfare and community sector (ABS 1996:2-3).

4RRR had no volunteers in the 30 to 39 age group. Nearly 60 percent of volunteers were

male and aged 20 to 29. A large number were also under the age of 20. It follows that more than half of the volunteers were single, while only a third were married. About 45 percent of volunteers had been educated up to year 11, while a large proportion had completed TAFE or business college. Nearly two thirds of volunteers were in full-time employment and 40 per cent were employed in professional and managerial occupations.

Two conclusions can be drawn from these results. Firstly, the majority of volunteers at 9CRX and 2TEN are not in the workforce or are employed part-time and would therefore have more time on their hands to commit to the station. Not only does 4RRR not have enough volunteers, those that it does have are mainly in full-time employment. Secondly, most of 4RRR volunteers are young, while at 2TEN there is a fairly even spread of age groups and 9CRX volunteers are generally older. The larger proportion of youth at 4RRR indicates a lack of volunteers with sufficient skills to run a radio station. In small towns younger volunteers are also unlikely to commit themselves for the long term given that educational prospects will require of them to move to larger centres. Combined with the large proportion of volunteers in full-time employment, there is a good case for 4RRR to consider, in the first instance, the recruitment of older volunteers who are either in part-time employment or no longer in the work force. 2TEN emphasises youth development in its constitution, but it is not a youth station. From the point of view of parents, the presence of staff at 2TEN, as well as older volunteers would provide a safe environment for youth. Furthermore, the mix of age groups, and possibly also the greater involvement by women, could encourage greater tolerance for young people and increases the possibility for denser interlocking networks that reach out into the community. Young people are largely missing from 9CRX and this could be related to the presence of more recreational opportunities for young people in the nearby urban centres.

The structural differences evident among the three community radio stations can partly account for the success or difficulties experienced by each station. The main underlying difference appears to be the volunteer age distribution, which can also account for differences in measures of social capital.

## **6. Measures of Social Capital.**

The measures of social capital presented here are restricted to *participation in networks* and *reciprocity*. Here again, the ABS study of voluntary work provides a useful comparison of the results.

Participation in networks is the element of social capital that refers to the 'more or less dense interlocking networks of voluntary and mutual relationships between individuals and groups' (Onyx & Bullen 1997:5). Research of voluntary organisations already assumes a store of social capital, but there may be significant differences between similar organisations. Aspects of participation examined in this research are volunteer recruitment, duration and hours of volunteer involvement, and networks beyond the community radio station.

Volunteers were asked who influenced them to become involved with the community radio station. For all three stations family and friends accounted for about 40 percent of community radio recruitment. This result is below the national average, which found that 58 percent of volunteers were recruited in this way (ABS 1996:6). About a third of the case study volunteers sought the activity out on their own. At 9CRX, 20 percent of new volunteers were influenced by listening to an announcer while at 4RRR this was not a factor in the recruitment of volunteers. At 2TEN teachers were also influential in volunteer recruitment. Clearly word-of-mouth is an important factor in community radio volunteer recruitment, and probably is far more effective compared to on-air appeals.

At both 9CRX and 2TEN the median duration of volunteer membership was between three and five years, while at 4RRR it was between one and three years. At 2TEN, 41 percent of the volunteers had been with the station for more than five years, compared to 35 percent at 9CRX and 12 percent at 4RRR. This suggests a degree of stability at 2TEN, which was lacking at 4RRR, where 44 percent of volunteers had been with the station less than one year.

Age probably accounts for these differences. Age may also account for the difference in the contribution of weekly hours to community radio. At 9CRX, 64 percent of volunteers contributed more than five hours to their station. At 2TEN, 25 percent of volunteers and at 4RRR only 13 percent of 4RRR volunteers contributed more than 5 hours a week to their station. According to the ABS survey the median hours of voluntary work tended to increase with age, since older volunteers no longer have family, work and study commitments (1996:5).

As part of the principle of participation in networks, I was also interested in the extent of membership of other organisations. I asked all volunteers to list what other volunteer organisations they had ever been or were now a member of, aside from the community radio station (table 4). Overall 2TEN volunteers had a higher participation rate compared to the other two stations, particularly for churches, youth clubs/guides/scouts; professional trade union membership and parents and teachers groups. The results suggest that 2TEN volunteers are more active in community organisations in general.

Table 4. Membership of other organisations (%).

Station	9CRX	2TEN	4RRR
Church	35.7	58.3	26.7
Pensioner	14.3	8.3	13.3
Environmental/social justice	14.3	20.8	13.3
Service club	32.1	25.0	33.3
Youth club/Guides/Scouts	28.6	79.2	6.7
Professional/trade union	32.1	45.8	26.7
Ethnic	7.1	4.2	6.7
P&T	10.7	16.7	0.0
Sports club	35.7	66.7	66.7
Participation rate*	2.3	3.6	2.4
Total (n)	28.0	24.0	15.0

\* No. of organisations per person

## 7. Reciprocity.

Reciprocity refers to the services provided by an individual to others in the general expectation that this kindness will be returned at some undefined time in the future (Onyx & Bullen 1997:5). In this section I restrict an examination of reciprocity in terms of the motivation for volunteers to become active in community radio and the personal benefits obtained from their activity. I do not present data relating to the activities of community broadcasting.

Table 5 presents the results to an open question asking volunteers why they became involved with their radio station. The table combines personal and social motivations. It indicates that the pursuit of a musical interest was the main reason for 2TEN and 4RRR volunteers. Once again, this result is probably related to age. Frith (1978) and Cuppitt et al (1996), found that youth use music in the formation of their identity. But music is not only important for youth. A number of older volunteers reported music as a major reason for their involvement in community radio. While music may not be as central to identity for older people as it is for youth, I found that for adult volunteers reference to music genres was the major way in which they described their perceived audience.

Table 5. Reason for community radio membership

Station	9CRX %	2TEN %	4RRR %
Total (n)	27	25	17
Support and contribute to the station	8 29.6	7 28	- 0.0
Community involvement/social interaction	15 55.6	2 8	2 11.8
Contribute to the community	6 22.2	1 4	- 0.0
Pursue an interest in music	5 18.5	7 28	8 47.1
Skills development/training	5 18.5	2 8	- 0.0
Personal development/experience	5 18.5	4 16	- 0.0
Something to do/fill in time/time available	4 14.8	3 12	4 23.5

At 9CRX and 2TEN the reason to ‘support and contribute to the station’ rated highly, while at 9CRX ‘community involvement and social interaction’ and ‘contribution to the community’ rated significantly higher compared to the other two stations. Possibly, age can also account for this difference since older people would have more time and fewer family

and employment commitments and are therefore more concerned with community interaction. The region serviced by 9CRX is experiencing rapid change with major increases in its population, and integration into the community by newer residents may also account for the higher rating. However, a second closed question of volunteer motivation revealed that ‘community involvement’ was more prevalent among 2TEN volunteers (80 percent), compared to 9CRX (69 percent) and 4RRR (59 percent). The discrepancy between the open and closed question suggests that 2TEN volunteers may take community involvement for granted.

A question detailing the personal benefits volunteers gained from their activity was adapted from the ABS survey (1996:6). As can be seen in table 6, the benefits of volunteering have individual as well as collective dimensions. ‘Personal satisfaction’ was listed most often (79.7 percent) together with ‘doing something worthwhile’ and ‘involved with local community’. For 9CRX and 2TEN volunteers, ‘personal satisfaction’ rated highest, while it rated fifth for 4RRR volunteers. For 4RRR volunteers ‘involvement with the local community’ rated equal with ‘doing something worthwhile’, ‘learned new skills’ and ‘social contact’. At all stations skills development rated high, while at 9CRX the maintenance of skills already held also rated high. At both 9CRX and 2TEN ‘gained self confidence’ rated high, while just over half of the 4RRR volunteers listed this as a personal benefit. The results vary little with the national survey conducted by the ABS which also found that benefits to the community was the main reason for volunteering and personal satisfaction was the main benefit of volunteering.

Table 6. Personal benefits of volunteering.

Station	9CRX	%	2TEN	%	4RRR	%	Total	%
Total (n)	32		25		17		74	
Involved with the local community	19	59.4	23	92	11	64.7	53	71.6
Gained self-confidence	20	62.5	20	80	9	52.9	49	66.2
Being active	18	56.3	12	48	9	52.9	39	52.7
Doing something worthwhile	23	71.9	21	84	11	64.7	55	74.3
Gained work experience	13	40.6	15	60	7	41.2	35	47.3
Provided me with a sense of direction	8	25.0	8	32	4	23.5	20	27.0
Improved people skills	18	56.3	16	64	6	35.3	40	54.1
Personal satisfaction	26	81.3	23	92	10	58.8	59	79.7
Pursue religious beliefs	2	6.3	1	4	-	0.0	3	4.1

Learned new skills	21	65.6	18	72	11	64.7	50	67.6
I am helping others	20	62.5	13	52	9	52.9	42	56.8
I am using my skills	23	71.9	16	64	9	52.9	48	64.9
Social contact	13	40.6	16	64	11	64.7	40	54.1

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Volunteering at the three community radio stations is characterised by a mixture of personal, organisational and community motivations. All the volunteers (except one) were also announcers, and while I have not included data relating to the activity of announcing, it is the vehicle through which personal, organisational and community ends can be achieved. Announcing provides an avenue for learning new skills and also attracts recognition from the community. It is a very public activity and for most volunteers, community feedback was extremely important. Participants who responded to a question about feedback indicated enthusiasm and were very positive about this element of radio volunteering. All announcers at 9CRX and 2TEN received feedback, and nearly two thirds of these reported regular and weekly feedback. By contrast, only nine (64 percent) of 4RRR announcers received feedback and of these only four reported weekly feedback. At all three stations feedback was mainly received over the telephone and at the time of broadcast. For 9CRX volunteers also received feedback at station functions, while at 2TEN and 4RRR feedback was received from people who ‘talk to you on the street’.

## 8. Conclusions.

Clearly 2TEN is best able to satisfy its volunteers who also report the highest gain of self-confidence. Although 2TEN volunteers consider the station’s purpose primarily as an entertainment service they also appear to be more active in other organisations in their community. It suggests that 2TEN forms part of a dense interlocking network. 2TEN’s sponsorship income demonstrates the high level of community support. For example, in addition to running small businesses station sponsors are also mothers and fathers with children who have benefited from volunteering at 2TEN. The station benefits and contributes

towards a sense of community pride that is evident at Tenterfield. This sense of pride is expressed in the town's efforts at keeping out fast-food chains and large retail stores and the promotion of its historic buildings. This community pride is further exemplified by 2TEN's focus on local programming; its refusal to take networked programming (apart from a national hourly news service); its astute decision to purchase available narrowcasting licenses, thus ensuring the extra frequencies are kept in the hands of the local community; and its role in fostering self-confidence in the town's youth. All these efforts at maintaining a local identity could attract a charge of xenophobia but this is not the case given 2TEN's efforts at increasing its reach across the border and into Stanthorpe. The expansion goes beyond a commercial imperative. The two towns share a sense of identity in terms of the rugged topography of the surrounding country; a tourism industry focussed on the nearby national parks and the expanding wine industry. Volunteers at 2TEN who had recently settled in Tenterfield also reported the locals as being very open to new residents: 'it's not like some towns that don't want to know about new settlers' (pers. com.).<sup>2</sup> Volunteers who had moved to the region from larger population centres reported that their involvement with 2TEN gave them 'a sense of belonging' and in a small town like Tenterfield it 'seemed to keep people there'.

9CRX, on the other hand, sees its primary function as a news and information service and has clear procedures and structures, yet, at the time of the fieldwork, there was evidence of dissatisfaction among the volunteers. Much of the dissatisfaction centred on improving programming standards, in order to attract more sponsorship. The situation at 9CRX encapsulated a conflict that has characterised Australian community radio since its inception: those in favour of the highest standards and professionalism clash with others who promote access, participation, diversity and plurality and who are critical of professionalism (Barlow 1998:266). While 9CRX certainly had community support, expressed in terms of membership and business sponsors, it was less evident that the station was part of a dense interlocking network. This may be a function of the size of region serviced by 9CRX, its proximity to nearby urban centres and the rapid growth of its population. It could also be due

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<sup>2</sup> Volunteers wished to remain anonymous.

to its more homogenous volunteer structure. Many volunteers are retired and therefore no longer have the family commitments typical of the 35 to 44 age group, such as was the case for 2TEN.

The influence of the volunteer age structure on a generalist community radio station was most clearly brought home with the example of 4RRR. 4RRR volunteers indicated lack of clarity over the station's primary purpose, probably the result of their youth. Many were young, inexperienced and had not been with the station for very long. As a result they would also have lacked confidence in decision-making despite 4RRR's very open and flat decision-making structure. The younger volunteers faced the prospect of leaving Roma in order to further their education, or they had full-time employment commitments leaving them little time to network with other members of the community. The situation at Roma also brought home the importance of interpersonal communication. At 2TEN, volunteers reported extensive personal networks, particularly in churches and youth organisations, while at 4RRR volunteers indicated a lower participation rate thereby diminishing opportunities for the formation of dense interlocking networks which would generate greater support for the station. Lack of volunteers with time on their hands to commit to community broadcasting meant that 4RRR was unable to meet its objectives, as set out in its Articles of Association.

## **9. Implications.**

The results of the case study raises implications for the performance of generalist community radio stations as well as for future research. It demonstrates that a station's financial success is not necessarily related to the size of the host population. Instead, I present a case for taking into account a station's volunteer structure, in which age, and possibly the gender balance, appear to be the primary underlying factors. It appears that a cross-section of age groups, and possibly the greater proportion of female volunteers, has proven to be beneficial for 2TEN. The study also confirms the importance of participation in volunteer networks that go beyond the radio station and into the community -- an important element of social capital. The results suggest that an emphasis on community development, which encourages

broad participation from the community, can result in a successful community radio station. It suggest that this is more important than programming, although programming is the vehicle through which community development takes place. Hence the importance of programming is not ruled out, but it should come second.

Finally, my research is intended to add to a growing body of qualitative work on Australian community broadcasting. While the research is essentially qualitative, the use of a quantitative tool raises the possibility of the development of a measure of social capital in community radio more generally.

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